

Cathy Yanni (SBN 105036)
JAMS
Two Embarcadero Center
Suite 1500
San Francisco, CA 94111
Telephone: 415-774-2635
Facsimile: 415-982-5287
Email: cathy@cathyanni.com

Administrator of the Wildfire Assistance Program

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION**

In re:

PG&E CORPORATION

- and -

**PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC
COMPANY,**

Debtors.

- ☐ Affects PG&E Corporation
☐ Affects Pacific Gas and Electric Company
☒ Affects Both Debtors

This Document Relates to All Cases

Bankruptcy Case
No. 19-30088

Chapter 11
(Lead Case)
(Jointly Administered)

**QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE WILDFIRE
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Related Docket Nos.: 2223 and 2409

QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Cathy Yanni, the court-appointed Administrator of the Wildfire Assistance Program hereby submits her first Quarterly Report pursuant to this Court's *Supplemental Order (A) Approving Appointment of Administrator and Establishing Guidelines for the Wildfire Assistance Program and (B) Granting Related Relief*, dated June 5, 2019 [Docket No. 2409] (the "Appointment Order"). This Quarterly Report provides an update on the status of the Administrator's work from June 5, 2019 through October 25, 2019 (the "Reporting Period").

1 **A. BACKGROUND.**

2 On October 8, 2017, multiple fires began spreading throughout Northern California.
3 Collectively, the Atlas, Adobe, Blue, Cascade, Cherokee, Honey, LaPorte, Lobo, Macaama,
4 McCourtney, Nuns, Norrbom, Partrick, Pocket, Point, Pressley, Pythian, Redwood, Sulphur, Tubbs,
5 and “37” fires (“2017 Wildfires”) burned over 245,000 acres and destroyed an estimated 8,900
6 structures. On November 8, 2018, another wildfire began near Paradise, California (together with
7 the 2017 Wildfires, the “2017 and 2018 Wildfires”), burning over 153,300 acres and destroying
8 more than 13,900 residences. The Camp Fire in Paradise is the deadliest and most destructive fire
9 in California history.
10

11 On May 1, 2019, Pacific Gas & Electric Company (“PG&E”) filed a motion to establish a
12 \$105 million fund (the “Wildfire Assistance Fund”) to provide relief from the financial stress and
13 burden for those who lost their homes due to the 2017 and 2018 Wildfires (“Wildfire Claimants”).
14 The Court approved the motion on May 23, 2019, and appointed Cathy Yanni as the Administrator
15 of the Wildfire Assistance Program on June 5, 2019. The Program is intended to provide financial
16 assistance to Wildfire Claimants who are in the most need. The Appointment Order requires the
17 Administrator to “prepare and, within 30 days after the end of a quarterly period (or such longer
18 period as may be agreed to by the Administrator and the Committees or as authorized by Court
19 order), file quarterly reports with the Court and serve such reports on counsel to the Debtors and the
20 Committees. These reports shall include (i) the number of applications submitted to and processed
21 by the Wildfire Assistance Program during the preceding quarter, and (ii) an account of the receipts
22 and disbursements from the Wildfire Assistance Fund during the preceding quarter.”
23
24
25
26
27
28

1 **B. ENGAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONALS.**

2 The Appointment Order authorizes the Administrator to engage a team of professionals to
3 assist in administering the Wildfire Assistance Program. The Administrator has engaged the
4 following professionals:

- 5 (1) David Agretelis, Assistant Program Administrator. An experienced settlement
6 allocation project manager who has worked with the Program Administrator on
7 multiple MDLs and inventory settlements for over fifteen years.
- 8 (2) BrownGreer PLC, a national settlement administration firm that assists clients with
9 the legal and administrative aspects of the design, approval, and implementation of
10 claims resolution facilities to provide notice processes, damages payments, and other
11 benefits for the resolution of mass claims. BrownGreer's team is comprised of
 lawyers, analysts, project managers, software developers, claims reviewers, and
 communication specialists experienced in resolving mass claims.
- 12 (3) Bank of America Merrill Lynch, the financial institution selected to hold and
13 disburse funds from the Qualified Settlement Fund.

14 **C. ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD.**

15 Pursuant to the Appointment Order, the Administrator has specific duties to ensure the fair
16 and equitable distribution of the Wildfire Assistance Fund consistent with the principles and
17 guidelines as established by the Court. These duties include, among other things: (i) determining
18 the Eligibility Criteria for participation in and receipt of funds from the Wildfire Assistance Program
19 and (ii) consulting with the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") as to the Eligibility
20 criteria and prevention of duplicate payments.

21 **1. Establish Eligibility Criteria.**

22 Following her June 6 court-appointment, the Administrator coordinated with BrownGreer
23 to establish the requirements for participation in and receipt of funds from the Wildfire Assistance
24 Program ("Eligibility Criteria"), including the types of expenses for which Wildfire Claimants can
25 obtain financial assistance and the amount of assistance to be provided to each eligible Wildfire
26 Claimant. The Eligibility Criteria ensure that the Wildfire Assistance Fund is distributed in a fair
27 Claimant. The Eligibility Criteria ensure that the Wildfire Assistance Fund is distributed in a fair
28

and equitable manner; that assistance is prioritized to those eligible Wildfire Claimants who are most in need; and that only eligible Wildfire Claimants receive distributions from the Wildfire Assistance Fund.

As part of this process, the Administrator consulted with the Debtors, Committees, and Counsel, sharing the draft Eligibility Criteria for their review and comment. The Administrator also extensively coordinated with the FEMA as detailed in section C.2. After incorporating all reasonable input and having received no objections from the Debtors, Committees, or FEMA, the Administrator filed the Eligibility Criteria with the Court on August 15, 2019 [Docket No. 3556] and immediately made a copy available on the public website for the Wildfire Assistance Program.

2. Coordination with FEMA.

Pursuant to the Appointment Order, the Administrator consulted with FEMA regarding the Eligibility Criteria to ensure eligible claimants do not receive funds from both FEMA and the Wildfire Assistance Program for the same expenses. In addition to email exchanges, the Administrator had multiple meetings with FEMA, as detailed in Table 1. On August 7, 2019, FEMA approved the Eligibility Criteria. The Administrator and FEMA finalized an Information Sharing Access Agreement on October 2, 2019.

Table 1. Meetings with FEMA			
Date	Description	Contacts	Location
7/1/19	Wildfire Assistance Program introduction with FEMA	Brock Peterson, Ann Winterman	Teleconference
7/18/19	FEMA discussion on Stafford Act and duplicate benefits	Ann Winterman, Blair McDonald, J.P. Henderson	Teleconference
7/25/19	Meet with FEMA to discuss Eligibility Criteria and avoiding duplication of benefits	Ann Winterman, J.P. Henderson	Oakland
8/7/19	FEMA approved Eligibility Criteria	Ann Winterman, J.P. Henderson	Teleconference

Table 1. Meetings with FEMA			
Date	Description	Contacts	Location
10/2/19	FEMA Information Sharing Access Agreement finalized	Ann Winterman, J.P. Henderson, Maureen Dimino, Munira Mack	Teleconference

3. Establish Qualified Settlement Fund.

In June of 2019, following this Court’s entry of the Appointment Order, the Administrator and BrownGreer began the process of selecting a financial institution to hold and disburse funds from the \$105 million Wildfire Assistance Fund. The Administrator and BrownGreer considered various factors, including (1) the presence of physical bank branch locations in the geographic area close in proximity to the 2017 and 2018 Wildfires (specifically, Chico, CA), (2) the anticipated cost associated with the required banking services of each institution, and (3) the anticipated interest earnings on the Wildfire Assistance Fund, subject to the Court’s guidelines on how the QSF may be invested. The Administrator and BrownGreer explored detailed proposals from three financial institutions, ultimately selecting Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

On July 17, 2019, the Court entered an *Order (A) Establishing Qualified Settlement Fund for the Wildfire Assistance Program and (B) Authorizing QSF Administrator* [Docket No. 3026] (the “QSF Order”). The QSF Order established a Qualified Settlement Fund for the Wildfire Assistance Program and approved Cathy Yanni as the QSF administrator.

On July 19, 2019, the Administrator and BrownGreer applied for and successfully obtained an Employer Identification Number (“EIN”) for the QSF from the Internal Revenue Service under the legal name Wildfire Assistance Program Qualified Settlement Fund. Using that EIN, the Administrator and BrownGreer established bank accounts for the QSF with Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

1 **4. Communication with Potential Claimants.**

2 **(a) Grassroots Outreach Campaign.**

3 The Administrator led a grassroots outreach effort, visiting the affected communities and
4 meeting with community leaders, representatives, and potential claimants to identify trusted
5 sources, learn more about the claimant population, and share information about the Program. The
6 Administrator designed an infocard and distributed 20,000 copies at community meetings and to
7 community groups and agencies for distribution throughout the fire zones. The Administrator
8 attended multiple meetings and made presentations, answered questions about the Program, and
9 reported on the status of claim filings. Table 2 outlines those community meetings.
10

11 The Administrator personally emailed and personally called unrepresented claimants,
12 attorneys, community organizations, and community leaders to promote the Wildfire Assistance
13 Program. To increase the informational reach to both represented and unrepresented claimants, the
14 Administrator also coordinated with Butte County on a direct mail notice campaign of 15,000
15 infocards to residents identified by Butte County as fire survivors.
16

17 In addition, the Administrator consulted with PG&E on their August 15, September 4, and
18 October 22, 2019 press releases, which were covered by multiple media outlets, and coordinated
19 with Butte County to issue public notice on its website on October 1, 2019. Information regarding
20 the Wildfire Assistance Program also is included on community websites, including Butte County's
21 211 site, which provides a direct link to the Wildfire Assistance Program's website.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

Table 2. Community Outreach

Date	Description	Contact(s)	Location(s)
6/7/19	Administrator's initial site visit to Camp Fire Zone	N/A	Paradise, Magalia, Chico
6/13/19	Wildfire Assistance Program Orientation Meeting	TCC, UCC, PG&E, bankruptcy counsel and counsel for claimants	San Francisco
7/19/19	Meet with Butte County, Town of Paradise to provide information and plan collaboration	Sherri McCracken, Shelby Boston, Bruce Alpert, Lauren Gill, Greg Bolin	Paradise
7/19/19	Meet with Camp Fire claimants; tour of Camp Fire Zone, Paradise, and Magalia	Karen Gowins (TCC Member)	Paradise and Magalia
7/20/19	Meet with Camp Fire claimants and TCC Members; tour of Camp Fire Zone and Paradise	Kirk Trostle and Karen Lockhart (TCC Members), Patty Garrison	Paradise, Yuba City
8/14/19	Coordinate with PG&E regarding digital signage for satellite offices and delivery of 5,000 infocards	Lynsey Paolo (PG&E Senior Communications Manager)	San Francisco, PG&E local offices in North Bay and Camp Fire Zones
8/20/19	Meet with State Legislature staff regarding Eligibility Criteria and claims process	Staff of Senator Jim Nielson (4th District)	Chico
8/20/19	Butte County outreach; delivery of 7,000 infocards	Shelby Boston (Director of Employment and Social Services)	Oroville
8/20/19	Meet with Paradise Town Manager regarding infocard outreach	Lauren Gill (Town Manager)	Paradise
8/20/19	Coordinate infocard outreach with Camp Fire Zone Captain Organization	Jenna Murray (Executive Director)	Paradise
8/20/19	Meet with Mendocino County Long Term Recovery Group, Community Foundation of Mendocino County	Rose Bell	Teleconference
8/27/19	Coordinate with Red Cross to discuss Program; delivery of 3,000 infocards	Ann Reynolds (Disaster Director Pacific Division)	Santa Rosa

Table 2. Community Outreach

Date	Description	Contact(s)	Location(s)
9/3/19	Assistant Administrator's presentation at Paradise Community Information Meeting	Approximately 200 Paradise constituents (with additional presentations and attendance by Butte County, Town of Paradise, Camp Fire, Paradise Unified School District, 211.org, Paradise Building Commission, Paradise Town Manager, Butte County Sheriff, PG&E, Paradise Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Paradise Police Department, Cal OES, Paradise Recreation and Parks District, and Butte County Assessor)	Paradise
9/6/19	Assistant Administrator's presentation to Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group	Approximately 100 representatives and case managers from FEMA, Legal Aid, Butte County Employment and Social Services, Faith-based organizations, financial institutions, volunteer fire services, 211.org, and long-term recovery committees	Chico
10/10/19	Coordinate with PG&E; delivery of 5,000 additional infocards	Lynsey Paolo (PG&E Senior Manager)	San Francisco
10/17/19	Butte County direct mail campaign; delivery of 15,000 infocards to Butte County fire survivors	Shelby Boston (Director of Employment and Social Services)	Oroville
10/18/19	Administrator's presentation to Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group	Approximately 100 representatives and case managers from FEMA, Legal Aid, Butte County Employment and Social Services, Faith-based organizations, financial institutions, volunteer fire services, 211.org, and Long Term Recovery committees	Chico
10/22/19	Administrator's presentation to HopeNow	Eric Selk (Executive Director of HopeNow) and 34 representatives from the mortgage housing industry	Teleconference
10/23/19	Infocards to Magalia Community Church	Karen Gowins (TCC Member)	Magalia

1 **(b) Public Website and Social Media.**

2 Before the Wildfire Assistance Program opened, the Administrator launched an
3 informational mobile-friendly public website, www.NorCalWildfireAssistanceProgram.com.
4 BrownGreer developed the site, including a customized logo and design. When the website opened
5 on July 15, 2019, it included Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQs”), copies of relevant Court
6 Orders, a dedicated email address, a toll-free phone number, and an option to sign up to receive
7 future Program notifications.
8

9 On August 15, 2019, the Administrator filed the Eligibility Criteria, posted the Criteria on
10 the public website, emailed everyone who signed up to receive future notifications, and
11 simultaneously opened a secure Portal allowing online claims submission using a computer, tablet,
12 smartphone, or similar device. Website updates that day included new FAQs and instructions for
13 submitting claims. There have been over 100,000 unique visits to the website to date, 63% of which
14 come from users on mobile devices.
15

16 In addition to the public website, the Administrator created a Facebook page on August 5,
17 2019, to share program information with the public and amplify community outreach efforts. Over
18 8,500 visits to the website have originated from links posted on social media sites (*i.e.*, Facebook,
19 Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn), including direct clicks from the Program’s Facebook page and from
20 social media pages operated by local community members, agencies, and organizations.
21

22 **(c) Dedicated Call Center and Email Inbox.**

23 BrownGreer established a Call Center with a toll-free phone number and dedicated email
24 address for claimants and attorneys to contact the Wildfire Assistance Program with questions and
25 to receive claim filing assistance. Beginning July 19, 2019, the toll-free number provided an
26 informational recording including Program information and directing callers to the public website
27 to sign up for additional information. Communications Specialists began fielding calls to the toll-
28

1 free number on August 15, 2019, after the Administrator filed the Eligibility Criteria. The Call
2 Center is staffed with 26 trained, live agents Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. PT and
3 Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PT. The Call Center has handled over 11,000 calls
4 since opening.

5
6 BrownGreer also maintains a dedicated email inbox allowing claimants, lawyers, and others
7 to email the Wildfire Assistance Program. BrownGreer monitors the inbox seven days a week,
8 providing quick responses to claimants' questions and following up with calls to discuss any
9 particularly complex issues. When necessary, inquiries sent to the inbox are answered directly by
10 the Administrator.

11
12 Claimants and lawyers also have emailed and called the Administrator and BrownGreer staff
13 directly requesting assistance and have received responses in less than 24 hours.

14 **5. Claims Submission.**

15
16 Claimants use a secure online portal to complete a single Claim Form for both Basic Unmet
17 Needs and Supplemental Unmet Needs claims. BrownGreer worked with the Administrator to
18 design and develop this simple, claims filing process that solicits all necessary information to
19 determine claimant eligibility for compensation from the Wildfire Assistance Program. The claim
20 filing Portal is mobile-friendly, and claimants have accessed the mobile version over 74,000 times
21 to obtain Program information, submit a claim, and/or receive claim status updates.

22 **6. Claims Review and Processing.**

23
24 The Program began receiving claims on August 15, 2019, the same day the Administrator
25 filed the Eligibility Criteria. The Administrator began reviewing claims immediately and paid the
26 first eligible claim on August 28, 2019, thirteen days after the Program opened.

27
28 With support from BrownGreer's trained claims review team, the Administrator reviews all
claimant submissions and confirms that the claimed address is located within the boundary of a

1 2017 or 2018 Wildfire, by reference to available data that provides independent information on
2 property and fire location. Claimants who do not provide adequate documentation for the
3 Administrator to evaluate their claims receive notices outlining the missing information or
4 documents and providing the opportunity to cure the deficiencies. Claimants who provide an
5 address that is outside the boundary of a 2017 or 2018 Wildfire are notified that they are ineligible
6 to receive compensation from the Wildfire Assistance Program. Claimants may submit additional
7 documentation for the Administrator to review if they believe the determination is incorrect.
8

9 **7. Fraud Prevention.**

10 The Wildfire Assistance Program implemented a multi-layered approach to fraud prevention
11 and analysis. At the front-end, the Program uses a captcha system on its website to distinguish
12 human from machine input and uses additional web and data analytics to pinpoint any anomalies in
13 website use or claims submissions. The Call Center uses an identity verification procedure to
14 confirm each caller's identity before discussing any claim information, including claim status.
15 Additionally, the claims review team is trained to look for irregularities in claim submissions,
16 altered documents, and other deviations requiring escalation for review by the Administrator.
17 Finally, before confirming a claimant is eligible for payment, the Program completes an independent
18 inquiry using third-party sources provided by Lexis/Nexis to verify the claimant's identity. Only
19 after positive verification does the Administrator confirm a claimant's eligibility for payment.
20
21

22 **8. Payment of Eligible Claims.**

23 In designing the claims process the Administrator and BrownGreer considered which
24 potential methods of payment to eligible claimants would be most effective. In addition to payment
25 by check, the Administrator sought to offer methods of payment for those claimants without a
26 reliable physical mailing address, as well as those claimants without a bank account. After
27 exploring various options the Administrator and BrownGreer determined to offer payment by (1)
28

digital distribution through Zelle®, (2) Prepaid debit card, and (3) check. Zelle is a payment application that allows funds to be issued electronically directly to the claimant's bank account without requiring the claimant to provide bank account information. Instead, the application uses either the claimant's mobile phone number or email address associated with his or her Zelle account as the secure token to initiate payment. Zelle payments are ideal for claimants who do not have a consistent physical address, because they do not require the payment to be mailed. Prepaid debit cards are an attractive option for claimants who do not have bank accounts, as claimants can use them to withdraw cash at an automated teller machine or at a point-of-sale anywhere that accepts Visa. The breakdown of payment methods selected by claimants who submitted a claim form to date is: (a) 57% Check, (b) 23% Zelle, and (c) 20% Prepaid Card.

D. CURRENT PROGRAM STATISTICS.

As of October 25, 2019, the Wildfire Assistance Program has received 13,572 claims and determined 6,742 to be eligible for payment. Since issuing its first payment on August 28, 2019, the Program has issued claimant payments totaling \$21,552,500 within the first 58 days after launching. Table 3 shows receipts and disbursements from the Wildfire Assistance Fund.

Table 3. Fund Receipts and Disbursements		
	Description	Amount
1.	Total Receipts	\$105,329,292.84
	(a) Settlement Fund	\$105,000,000.00
	(b) Interest Earned	\$329,292.84
2.	Total Disbursements	\$22,051,308.75
	(a) Payments to Eligible Claimants	\$21,552,500.00
	(b) Administrative Expenses	\$498,808.75
3.	Remaining Funds to Disburse	\$83,277,984.09

1 Of the 13,572 claims submitted to the Program, 8,303 claimants report that they are
2 represented by a lawyer (61%) and 5,269 do not report being represented by any lawyer (39%).

3 **E. FUTURE EFFORTS.**

4 The Wildfire Assistance Program will continue accepting claims for Basic Unmet Needs
5 and Supplemental Unmet Needs through November 15, 2019. The review of Basic Unmet Needs
6 claims is ongoing and will continue until all filed claims have been evaluated to a final
7 determination. The Administrator will continue issuing payments on a weekly basis until all eligible
8 claims have been paid.
9

10 In addition to processing these Basic Unmet Needs claims, the Administrator will begin
11 evaluating Supplemental Unmet Needs claims during the fourth quarter of 2019 with the anticipated
12 completion of allocation and payment of all Supplemental Unmet Needs claims within the first
13 quarter of 2020.
14

15 **F. CONCLUSION.**

16 The Administrator will continue to perform her responsibilities and duties consistent with
17 the Appointment Order and all other directives of this Court and will issue her next quarterly report
18 in accordance with the Appointment Order.
19

20 Dated: October 28, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

22 /s/ Cathy Yanni

23 CATHY YANNI

24 Administrator, Wildfire Assistance Program
25
26
27
28